

Final Report from Round Table 2: Modes de livraison

Produced in the context of

Vision 2015: Strategic Planning in the Faculty of Arts, University of Ottawa

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GOAL: To make recommendations that will enhance learning and improve methods of course delivery

0. INTRODUCTION

As educators, one of our most important goals is to enhance learning, both inside and outside the classroom. However, given the broad array of options that are available to support teaching and learning in the twenty-first century, finding the most effecting means of doing so can present a challenge. This is particularly true in the Faculty of Arts, which houses seventeen academic units offering a wide range of undergraduate and graduate programs. These units and their programs are extremely diverse in nature and cannot all usefully employ the same types of techniques or resources. One-on-one instruction in music, lectures to undergraduate classes of 350 students in environmental studies, discussion groups in language classes, theatre workshops, seminars in history: each discipline and level (e.g., first year, fourth year, graduate) has different needs. Because of this vast diversity, it is not possible to propose a single overarching strategy to address methods of course delivery. Instead, the aim of this report is to summarize the results of a number of brainstorming sessions and discussions that took place during the fall 2010 semester among a cross-section of participants from the Faculty of Arts, and to present possible options that may be worthy of pursuit or further detailed investigation.

To facilitate reading and further planning, we have organized the report into five broad themes and tried to capture issues that are of concern across the Faculty. Nevertheless, it must be recognized that, moving forward, it will be necessary to address some questions at the level of individual departments or units. In addition, for the sake of clarity, we have tried to localize specific points of discussion under particular categories; however, in reality, there are many points of intersection and overlap, both within sections of this report and between this report and those to be produced by the other Round Tables.

Finally, in the context of methods of course delivery, it will come as no surprise that the plethora of new and constantly changing technologies garners considerable attention. Yet it is important to recognize that although technology seems to be almost omnipresent, when it comes to

teaching and learning, technology is a tool, and the professor and students should remain the key players in – as well as the central focus of – the learning experience. Consequently, while the majority of issues raised in this report are directly related to technologies, this was not the sole focus of the discussions or of the ensuing report.

1. THE CONSULTATION PROCESS

The recommendations made in this report stem from a consultation process that involved a series of Round Table meetings and a “Town Hall” style forum. The Round Table was comprised of ten members (See Annex 1) drawn from across the Faculty of Arts, representing a broad range of experiences in teaching, and the use and management of new and established technologies in the classroom and university environment in general. Richard Pinet, from the Centre for e-Learning also participated. The Round Table was co-chaired by Lynne Bowker (School of Information Studies) and Eric Crighton (Department of Geography).

Round Table meetings held on October 21 and November 4, 2010, provided participants with the opportunity to discuss the existing “learning context” in the Faculty and identify the scope of opportunities and barriers moving forward into the future. These meetings also led to further discussions via e-mail, and to the development and distribution of a question guide for the Town Hall forum which took place on November 25, 2010. Lasting approximately 2.5 hours, the forum was attended by a diverse group of participants from across the Faculty. Participants included undergraduate and graduate students, upper administration, technical support staff from the Faculty of Arts and the Teaching and Learning Support Services (TLSS), and numerous professors from departments and schools including Communication, English, *Français*, Geography, History, Information Studies, Linguistics, Music, OLBI, Translation and Visual Arts, among others.

The following report outlines a series of recommendations that emerged through the consultation process.

2. DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The discussion and recommendations have been grouped according to five main themes: 1) infrastructure and scheduling, 2) support and communication, 3) new technologies, 4) distance education, and 5) policy development.

THEME 1: INFRASTRUCTURE AND SCHEDULING

With regard to the question of infrastructure and scheduling, a key point that was raised repeatedly in all the discussions was the need for flexibility. Different courses require different options for delivery, and having the ability to choose and implement the right tools, techniques

and even schedules for a given course is considered paramount. In some cases, this may even mean being able to *opt out* of certain options (e.g. being able to turn *off* WiFi access).

In addition, it is important to note that infrastructure is closely tied to scheduling. It is not realistic to equip every single classroom with every single option, which means that it is important to schedule a given course in the type of classroom that contains the necessary resources to allow optimal delivery of that course.

Recommendations:

Flexibility can be manifested in a range of ways, such as:

- Maintain and update (both hardware and software) a small number of dedicated teaching labs required for specific purposes (e.g. language learning), but reduce the overall number of open access/public computer labs in favour of classrooms/common areas better equipped to allow students to bring and use their own computers.
- Ensure that all new desks/work surfaces in classrooms/common areas are:
 - movable as opposed to fixed desks/chairs to facilitate discussion groups
 - solid desks as opposed to the “fold-out tablet” writing surfaces which cannot easily accommodate laptop computers
- Ensure that there are enough accessible power outlets for students to plug in laptops (or provide battery chargers), both in classrooms and in other areas on campus where students can do work
- Provide Wi-Fi access with a strong/steady signal available on all parts of the campus, but which can be turned off in a classroom if desired. Turning off WiFi may only be an option in large lecture halls (e.g. Marion Auditorium, Alumni Auditorium, and some of the larger auditoriums in Montpetit, Morisset and Desmarais) where local signals are less likely to affect other classrooms or offices. In smaller classrooms with fewer students turning off WiFi may be less important as it is easier for a professor to enforce course policies in this regard; however, if the option were available, it would be appreciated.
- Increase the number of classrooms that have *interactive* white boards.
- Install black/whiteboards that are accessible and visible (i.e., not *behind* the projection screen)
- Modify existing multimedia control podiums positioned so that the professor can face the students while operating the computer/projection system instead of having his/her back to the students (e.g. Alumni Auditorium; B-152 and B-163 at Lees Ave)
- Provide multiple rooms or space/privacy flexibility within larger rooms so that part of the class can be a lecture to the entire group, followed by break-out sessions with smaller groups
- Schedule class length (i.e. 1.5 hrs vs 3 hrs) to suit the nature of the class (e.g. sometimes technology set-up takes time, which can eat into a 1.5 hr class)

- Allow for the introduction of discussion groups for large courses, such that lectures comprise two hours per week and discussion groups one hour per week. This model is followed in many universities that have traditionally had very large class sizes (e.g. University of Toronto). Discussion groups allow for an exchange of ideas and provide students with the opportunity to question concepts and ideas introduced in the lecture. While discussion groups and labs currently exist for some courses, large scale adoption of this format will require modifications to the room scheduling system.

THEME 2: SUPPORT AND COMMUNICATION

Technical support and communication were among the most commonly identified problems during this consultation process. While in some cases the desired support might actually exist, students and staff may not be fully aware of the options or know how to access them.

Recommendations:

- Establish what kinds of services/support resources are already in place in both the Faculty of Arts and at the University as a whole and increase the visibility of such resources. Examples range from improving publicity of university-level technical services and training such as those offered by TLSS for Blackboard, to teacher training services for new professors. While these types of services are well publicized during the orientation week, “information overload” during that period is reported. In the case of teacher training opportunities, one approach to publicizing them might be to establish the “best teachable moment” for each of the services offered. For example, rather than simply sending out yet another e-mail, a flyer about teacher training opportunities could be included in the envelopes of professors’ course evaluation results. It could be upon reading these results that professors feel motivated to improve certain aspects of their teaching. Identifying other “best teachable moments” corresponding to other services could be similarly useful.
- With the elimination of some open access/public labs (see Theme 1), students may face the need for additional technical support. It is therefore recommended that existing open access/public lab-specific technical support be re-deployed into various visible locations across the faculty. (Note, however, that technical support for the specialized labs (e.g. language learning labs) must be maintained).
- There need to be closer links/better communications between professors and technical staff concerning significant technological changes (e.g. upgrades or new software or hardware installations). It would be beneficial to have technical learning services that can

visit offices. Professors are challenged to manage technology as well as service teaching, and research portfolios. A sort of local “Nerds on Site” team that will work with individuals as necessary would be appreciated.

- Related to this is the need to create a forum where information and results of pilot projects can be shared. One example of such a project is the “iPads for marking” pilot project currently being conducted in the faculty; another is a hybrid learning course currently taking place in OLBI. The most straightforward approach might be to establish a website containing project descriptions, contact information of those involved and, upon completion of the pilot project, project reports. Such a site would go a long way towards allowing individuals with similar interests or goals to connect and to learn from one other’s experiences.
- A similar site could be used to identify professors with information/communications technologies (ICT) expertise within each department to establish a sort of network of experts in technology who could be consulted by other colleagues in the Faculty. (This would be a little bit like the “Experts on Call” database maintained by the Marketing and Communications team).
- Some areas such as Visual Arts are greatly lacking in visual resources and need additional assistance/support.
- The Faculty’s current technical support team (under Nabil Miguel) seem to be stretched very thin. Expansion of this team is recommended.

THEME 3: NEW TECHNOLOGIES

The pace of change with regard to new technologies is staggering. It is easy to feel pressured into thinking that we should all be able to stay on top of the latest gadget or fad and integrate these into our teaching (e.g. iPads, Twitter, Facebook, blogs, iTunes, wikis). Nevertheless, the message that came out clearly in the Round Table discussions and at the Town Hall meeting was that teaching needs to be about more than technologies. Appropriate integration of relevant technology is a good thing, but the mere use of flashy technology cannot compensate for inadequate content or poor delivery. The message from both students and professors was that it is preferable to do a good job with the “basics” and not to substitute entertainment for education.

Concerns were raised with regard to technology-based education strategies such as podcasting, for example. The question of copyright/ownership of the recorded lectures is unclear and contentious. There is the worry that it might discourage attendance since students may feel they can simply listen to the lecture at another time, as well as the concern that a podcast captures

only one aspect (the aural element) of a lecture, while missing others (e.g. visual aids, readings, body language).

A point that was strongly and repeatedly emphasized is that it is very important for the Faculty to recognize that there is additional overhead involved in designing and implementing any new mode of delivery or learning enhancement opportunity. If this is too arduous and must be done without adequate support, no one will be interested in pursuing such. For example, currently the clicker technology must be reserved and picked up for use, which takes time. Software changes and upgrades require adaptation of teaching materials.

It was also recognized that there are usually trade-offs involved when technologies are integrated. For instance, the use of clickers promotes participation and attendance, but it takes planning and time, and it may limit the content that can be covered in the class.

Recommendations:

- The Faculty needs to identify what are the specific barriers to integrating technology and what type of support is needed to overcome them. A sort of SWOL analysis focusing on these barriers and solutions could be useful in this respect (e.g. potential barriers may include lack of time, (perceived) lack of resources, lack of knowledge/confidence, compatibility issues, access/privacy/authorship/intellectual property).
- Additionally, the Faculty could create a fund and provide logistical support and time to professors who are willing to undertake pilot projects involving new modes of delivery. One outcome of such projects could be a requirement to share the results and experience across the Faculty and provide guidance to others who would subsequently like to try a similar approach.
- While most professors are open to the possibility of integrating relevant technologies, it is not realistic to expect every individual professor to independently keep up to date with all the latest trends and tools. While the final word regarding the appropriateness of a given technology for use in a specific course must rest with each professor, it would be helpful to have some kind of Faculty committee (e.g. including technical officers, educational technology specialists) who could vet and evaluate the potential of new technologies, at least as a preliminary step, and provide guidance/training to those professors interested in exploring the possibilities.

THEME 4: DISTANCE EDUCATION

It is important that the Faculty of Arts begins exploring, on a *limited* basis, options around distance education (DE) for our students. Distance education has the potential to extend the reach of the Faculty of Arts well beyond the city of Ottawa itself, allowing us to connect to

communities and students that we might not otherwise be able to reach. In this way, it could even be a means of helping the University to meet some of its objectives, such as serving the geographically diverse Franco-Ontarian population. Despite this potential, the feeling that came out of the Town Hall meeting was that DE should not be a core focus of the Faculty at the present time; rather, it should be available in very specific circumstances where there is a particular need. Examples might include introducing a small number of DE courses to fill gaps in course selection during the summer months (e.g. for co-op students), or providing DE access to on-campus courses for more remote communities (e.g. northern Franco-Ontarian students). Even on such a limited scale, DE is faced with a wide range of challenges, both technological and pedagogical, in order for it to be successful. The Faculty must give different options careful consideration and will need to provide the appropriate resources to make it work. Our recommendations as they relate to DE are therefore focused on exploring options and developing capacity on campus on a very small scale in the first instance, to ensure that it is done well.

Recommendations:

- Establish what has *already* been done to date in an ad hoc fashion within the Faculty of Arts (and other faculties), and gather this information/these professors together with a view to using this experience as a starting point for developing a cohesive approach to DE within the Faculty.
- Explore existing models of DE delivery (e.g. distance learning, Web delivery, blended learning) to determine what works best in which contexts.
- Pilot a more “coherent” approach to DE in the Faculty with the introduction of a very restricted number (e.g. 2 or 3) of dedicated DE courses (this includes developing, mounting and evaluating the courses). Given the potential time demands of setting up a DE course, it is important that compensation (time) be provided for the professor directing the pilot project. Adequate training and technical support and equipment must also be provided. Communications, translation, second-language learning or geomatics could be appropriate subjects to consider for this pilot, but it would be useful to put out a more general call to determine which professors may be interested or have experience. The pilot should take place in consultation with e-Learning and other experts on campus.
- Use lessons learned during the pilot to further develop and refine an appropriate DE program suitable for the Faculty’s needs.

THEME 5: POLICY DEVELOPMENT

As an increasing number of technologies in different forms become available, it is important to consider whether and how these can enhance the learning process, or if they may in fact interfere with or distract from it.

For example, there are some tasks for which it is beneficial to allow students to access laptops/internet (e.g. to research terminology for a translation exercise), but there are other instances where having such access proves to be a distraction (e.g. students updating Facebook profiles instead of paying attention to a lecture).

In addition, portable electronic devices such iPhones or Blackberries, which can be accessed discreetly, may provide unfair and inappropriate advantages to some students during an exam situation.

Up to this point, professors have been developing informal and ad hoc “policies” to deal with specific situations, but as technology becomes more ubiquitous, the Faculty should consider developing more formal policies governing the use of technology in the classroom. Again, because specific needs may vary from unit to unit or program to program, the Faculty policies may need to be high-level with individual units or professors having the option to introduce more specific policies appropriate to their needs.

Recommendations:

- Designate/hire a Faculty “policy advisor” who could be available for consultation to help individual professors devise appropriate policies for their courses.
- Designate a support team to investigate the intricacies of requiring/designating specific technologies for certain courses (e.g. clickers, laptops, software). This team should investigate questions such as: Can common laptops be purchased from an approved vendor? Serviced by faculty technicians? Paid for as part of tuition/ancillary fees? Streamlining such a process at the level of the Faculty, rather than having a duplication of effort at the level of each department, would be preferable. However, it could be a good idea to select and support one program to run a pilot project in the first instance.

GENERAL OVERALL RECOMMENDATION

The goal of Round Table 2 was to gather information regarding modes of course delivery and learning enhancement that can help to inform the strategic development of the Faculty of Arts. While the ad hoc discussion groups and Town Hall meeting did raise a range of interesting and important points and many new questions, it has become increasingly clear that there is an exceptionally diverse range of needs across the Faculty in this regard, and that it will be challenging to come up with solutions to meet everyone’s needs. Furthermore, because

technology-based endeavours require a significant investment of both money and time in order to be effectively implemented, the main recommendation that we would like to make is for the Faculty to undertake a more formal and comprehensive investigation.

As a first stage, it would be useful to carry out a sort of survey of approaches/models used in other institutions that are more technologically focused in order to get the lay of the land, to understand the possibilities and pitfalls, and to take advantage of the lessons learned by those who have been through this already.

This survey should be followed by an internal needs assessment (e.g. a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Limitations or SWOL) analysis. Such an analysis would need to cover questions such as:

What do professors need? What do students need? What does the class need? Who are our target markets (e.g. for DE)? Learning objectives? What tools and technologies can allow for that to happen? How much will it cost?

This SWOL analysis should be more structured than the ad hoc discussion groups used in the first phase of data gathering (i.e., the Round Tables and Town Hall meetings that contributed to this report). The SWOL analysis should be led by an experienced facilitator (e.g. Bob Parsons from TLSS) and would need representation from each unit in the Faculty (students, professors, support staff). The needs assessment would likely be a multi-stage undertaking, which might include the following:

- 1) Half-day retreat with representatives from all academic units
 - Note: this session could be recorded (e.g. using Echo 360) and/or transcribed so that others can view it and send their comments (the more involvement and “buy-in” that can be achieved early on, the better it will be down the road).
- 2) Focus group
 - Takes the results of the SWOL analysis and identifies the main priorities to be addressed
- 3) Questionnaire/survey (one for professors and one for students)
 - May need to be tailored to individual departments or programs to address particular tools or course-specific situations

3. COSTS

Many of the recommendations that are being made in this report can be funded through the redeployment of resources from one area to another. The best example of this is the decrease of open access/public computer labs and associated technical support in favour of the provision of WiFi and more generalized technical support across campus (while noting that special-purpose labs and associated technical support must be maintained). In the case of DE, some initial financial investment will be required to develop the pilot courses. With support from the Centre for e-Learning, DE courses can be developed for costs in the range of \$12,000 for a basic course, \$12-\$25,000 for a medium-grade course, and upwards of \$25,000 for a highly interactive course (e.g. including video clips). Note that if program-level templates are designed and applied, the cost for developing individual courses will go down. It is also important to note that while an initial investment will be required, DE over the long term can be expected to be revenue positive. Further, for the adoption of other technologies such as clickers and mandatory laptop computers, costs will be borne by students, but the Faculty could help by organizing group rates or bulk discounts.

Investments will be required in the case of the expansion of the faculty technical support team, the updating of classrooms and special-purpose labs, as well as the SWOL needs assessment. Expanding the support team will cost in the range of between \$100,000 and \$300,000 annually in salaries, depending on how many new staff are hired. Updating classrooms and labs, while costly, is an ongoing expense for the Faculty. We do not feel that following our recommendations will add significant additional costs here, but it will help to ensure that those expenditures that are made will bring maximum benefits to the Faculty.

Finally, the SWOL, if done professionally, could be expected to cost in the neighbourhood of \$7,000 for the initial data collection. Clearly, any follow-up and implementation of the recommendations gathered during the initial SWOL would represent additional costs.

4. MEASURING SUCCESS

A key measurement of the success of the changes we are recommending will come in the form of student, staff and faculty satisfaction with technical support and services and classroom infrastructure. While general satisfaction in these areas is tracked among the student body, a regularly scheduled survey complemented by several focus groups (e.g. every three years) could be conducted among staff and faculty to ensure that needs are being met and concerns are being heard.

Inventories of classroom and lab services needs to be kept (as is already done), minimum standards identified based on the size and purpose of the classroom/lab, and target dates set for

all classrooms/labs to meet these standards. Standards will have to be reassessed regularly to ensure they reflect the ever-changing requirements of new technologies as they emerge.

Success of various pilot studies including the DE pilot courses or the introduction of iPads as a marking tool must be assessed on a case-by-case basis. What is critical here, however, is that results of these studies be shared across the Faculty.

5. CONCLUDING REMARKS

Many of the recommendations made in this report are very general. Given the diversity in departments and programs in the Faculty, department-level needs assessments are required to examine the relevance of these issues and to develop more targeted recommendations. The role of the Faculty should be to provide educational technology experts to whom departments can turn for guidance. The Faculty should coordinate logistics (e.g. purchase, installation, technical support, and training) that can be customized to the needs of the individual units. Note that some units are under-served and we should strive for more equitable access/support.

ANNEX 1: ROUND TABLE 2 PARTICIPANTS*

Fernand Aubin (Fernand@uottawa.ca). Manager of the Writing Centre computer lab in the Faculty of Arts. Vast experience helping students and professors use the computer labs effectively, managing online testing.

Denis Bachand (dbachand@uottawa.ca) Vice Dean Governance and Secretary of the Faculty of Arts/Professor in Dept. of Communication. Long experience using WebCT and course management tools; interested in integrating technology into “conventional” courses.

Lynne Bowker (Co-chair) (lbowker@uottawa.ca). Director of School of Information Studies/ Professor in School of Translation and Interpretation. PhD in Language Engineering. Specializes in teaching of translation technologies; integration of tools into “conventional” courses; common laptop pilot project.

Eric Crighton (Co-chair) (eric.crighton@uottawa.ca). Professor in Dept. of Geography. iPad pilot project (using iPad for corrections in large intro course). User of WebCT and other course management tools; interested in integration of tools into “conventional” courses and identifying when this is appropriate.

Alain Erdmer (aerdmer@uOttawa.ca) Manager, Teaching and Learning Support Service. Experience with distance ed, with course management software (Virtual Campus), various delivery methods for courses (synchronous and asynchronous).

Marie-Josée Hamel (marie-josee.hamel@uottawa.ca) Professor at the Official Languages and Bilingualism Institute (OLBI). PhD in Language Engineering. Computer assisted language learning specialist. Interested in tools and techniques to facilitate language teaching and learning.

Bertrand Labasse (blabasse@uottawa.ca) Professor in the *Département de français*. Vast experience with integration of internet and other technologies in teaching. Interested in distance educations and new methods of delivering “conventional” courses (with and without the use of technologies).

Rocci Luppicini (rluppici@uottawa.ca) Professor in the Dept. of Communication. PhD in Educational Technologies. Experience with distance education and use of technologies in class.

Nabil Miguel (nmiguel@uottawa.ca) Computer analyst, Faculty of Arts. Experience facilitating and supporting the use of tools by professors and students.

Richard Pinet (rpinet@uottawa.ca). Manager, Centre for e-Learning. Background in Communication (Media Studies, New Technologies, Organizational Communication and Critical Pedagogy) and has taught at the University of Ottawa, Simon Fraser University, Trent University and the University of Western Sydney.

*We note with regret that, although they were invited, no students participated in the Round Table discussions. Students did, however, contribute greatly to the Town Hall discussion.